

The Kansas State Collegian's Q&A with Ames Tribune's Travis Hines

By TATE STEINLAGE
THE COLLEGIAN

Monday night, Iowa State fans had their eyes glued to their televisions, hoping and praying for a K-State upset over No. 8 Kansas.

The Cyclone faithful got their wish. For the second-straight season, K-State stunned their in-state rival in the "Octagon of Doom." The win meant that Iowa State — temporarily, before falling to Baylor on Wednesday — controlled their Big 12 regular season title destiny.

Now, Iowa State has work to do. K-State, meanwhile, has a season to salvage by at least climbing back to 500. One thing is for certain: Cyclone fans are K-State supporters no more.

To preview K-State vs. No. 12 Iowa State, the Kansas State Collegian sports desk sat down with Ames Tribune Iowa State men's basketball beat writer Travis Hines.

Collegian: How big of K-State fans were the Iowa State faithful on Monday? (laughs)

Travis Hines: Absolutely huge. I think a lot of Iowa State fans (and players and coaches) went in to Monday night thinking there wasn't much of a shot of K-State getting it done. But by midway through the second half, my Twitter feed was afire with Wildcat cheers.

Collegian: In the first meeting at Hilton Coliseum, Jameel McKay was a stand-out performer, scoring 15 points, grabbing seven rebounds and blocking three K-State shots. The Wildcats have struggled against lengthy post players. Do you see McKay having himself another solid outing?

Hines: I do. McKay was quiet against Texas' length

last weekend, but he's shown he can stand up to some physicality. He'll also force Thomas Gipson to run the floor with the way he transitions from offense to defense.

Collegian: Iowa State doesn't quite control their destiny, but the Cyclones do have a very decent shot at claiming at least a share of the Big 12 regular season title. Is there any added pressure on this team down the stretch?

Hines: I think they're looking at it as an opportunity. Not long ago, we had all given Kansas their 11th-straight Big 12 regular season title. Iowa State is now in a position to get at least a share of it and I think they'll try to make the most of it.

Collegian: Six of Iowa State's seven losses have come on the road this season, either in true road games or games played at a neutral site. Have the Cyclones been able to pinpoint their road woes at all this season, especially down the stretch in ballgames?

Hines: After winning back-to-back games on the road last week, it looks like the Cyclones have figured out what they need to do to win away from Hilton Coliseum. The reason they've given is that guys have bought into roles, whereas maybe that was a little iffy before.

Collegian: Georges Niang has yet to score in double-figures at Bramlage Coliseum in his career. However, he's lost weight and improved his game this past offseason. Do you see him having a breakout performance on the road in The Little Apple?

Hines: It's tough to pre-



Courtesy of Ames Tribune

dict which Cyclone will have a breakout performance each game simply because they have eight guys capable of doing it on any given night. At last check, they're the only team in the country with six guys averaging double figures.

Collegian: Aside from the help in the standings, do you think K-State's victory over Kansas benefits the Cyclones in not overlooking the Wildcats, who are still under .500?

Hines: Definitely, especially with a Big Monday matchup with Oklahoma looming just 48 hours later for the Cyclones.

Collegian: Iowa State and K-State has made for some fun matchups in recent memory. Do you foresee another close one Saturday?

Hines: A lot will depend. I think, on how well the Wildcats are able to regroup after such an emotional win Monday. If K-State can't replicate that energy and urgency, it'll be tough for them to stick close to an Iowa State team playing for something.

Collegian: One player K-State fans may not know about who they should keep their eyes on Monday and why?

Hines: Sophomore guard Matt Thomas has had an up-and-down career with Iowa State, but he scored a career high Saturday against Texas and will be looking to build on that performance.

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K-STATE VS. NO. 12 IOWA STATE

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KSU	QUICK STATS	ISU
63.2	POINTS PER GAME	79.4
31.4	REBOUNDS PER GAME	36.3
13.1	ASSISTS PER GAME	17.0

IMPACT PLAYERS



#23
Nigel Johnson
20 points on
8-11 shooting
(vs. Kansas Monday)

#1
Jameel McKay
15 points, 3 blocks,
7 rebounds
(vs. K-State on Jan. 20)



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K-State welcomes No. 12 Iowa State

By TIMOTHY EVERSON
THE COLLEGIAN

It's been a topsy-turvy week for the Big 12 conference as the regular season draws to a close. K-State and No. 12 Iowa State were in the thick of the madness earlier this week, which involved a court storming and a late-game collapse at home.

Now, the two meet Saturday in precarious positions with much to play for.

The Wildcats (14-15, 7-9) enter on a high after upsetting No. 8 Kansas at home Monday for the second-straight season, looking to prove to fans that not all is lost in an underwhelming campaign thus far.

The Cyclones, meanwhile, also prospered from K-State's big Monday win, with it allowing them to run the table with a favorable slate of games to finish off the regular season.

Chances come and go, however. Iowa State fell at home for the first time this season against a pesky Baylor side Wednesday. Now the Cyclones find themselves in a must-win situation heading into Manhattan Saturday as they attempt to spoil the Jayhawks' 11th-straight Big 12 title bid.

"You can't let one turn into two," Iowa State head coach Fred Hoiberg said to reporters after Wednesday's Baylor loss. "You have to bounce back with a great practice tomorrow with great energy and great effort. We now have two days to prepare for a afternoon game on the road. Obviously K-State is a team that has a little rest and a little mojo going after beating Kansas."

K-State is battling back at their own self-inflicted demons, desperately trying to get a foothold on a long-shot possible at-large bid.

"Now we have five top 25 wins," K-State head coach Bruce Weber said after the Kansas game. "We were one of six that had four so I don't know how many teams have five. It's a little frustrating and a little disappointing but it's done and over with."

Even with a compelling re-



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Freshman guard **Nigel Johnson** looks to circumnavigate an impasse of Iowa State defenders, including guard **DeAndre Kane**, in the second half of K-State's 80-73 defeat of Iowa State on March 1, 2014 in Bramlage Coliseum.

sume to ponder, the Wildcats are trying to keep their sights focused on just winning the next game and digging their way out of their hole one shovel-full at a time.

"All we can worry about is Iowa State and enjoy tonight," Weber said. "Take a day off tomorrow — they need it — we've had four games in 10 days. Wednesday is going to be weights and shooting and talking and then hopefully a good practice on Thursday. Lots of preparation for a very good Iowa State team. It'll be Senior Day, so hopefully a good crowd again."

The first matchup at Hilton Coliseum in Ames, Iowa was a classic as K-State found themselves with a 69-67 lead with a little over four minutes to go.

However, that's when the wheels fell off for K-State offensively. The Wildcats went scoreless for four minutes before junior guard Justin Edwards scored an uncontested layup with two second left to play. By then, though, it was too little too late.

"Good effort," Weber said after the game in Ames. "It's disappointing because we had a chance to beat one of the top-10 teams in the country, but we showed we're as good as anyone."

Iowa State junior forward Jameel McKay dominated the Wildcats down low with 15 points, seven rebounds and three blocks. On the season, McKay is averaging 10.9 points and 6.7 rebounds

per game to go along with 2.5 blocks a contest. He isn't a dominating force at 6 feet 9 inches, but his ability to run the floor gave K-State trouble in the first go around.

That said, a bright spot for K-State was their ability to slow the tempo, especially on Iowa State's home court where they have eclipsed the 80-point mark nine times this season.

"I thought we did good in transition," Weber said. "They had zero points in transition and they have one of the best transitions games in the country. That was huge."

In honor of Senior Day Saturday, senior guard Shawn Meyer and forwards Nino Williams and Thomas Gipson will be honored before the game.

Williams been the most consistent player for the Wildcats, finishing in double-figures 16 times this season. He also earned the 2014 Ed Nealy Most Improved Player award in 2014 and is likely to earn an All-Big 12 selection in the coming weeks.

Gipson is a four-year starter for K-State and, currently, sits at 1,193 career points, which is good for 14th all-time in school history.

Meyer has been a role player off the bench for the Wildcats as walk-on. He has earned the Big 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll twice in his time with program.

Tipoff between K-State and Iowa State is scheduled for 3 p.m. from Bramlage Coliseum.

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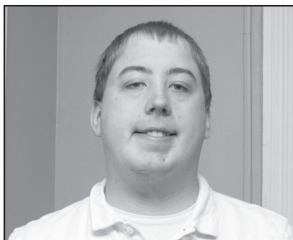
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K-State men's basketball's season has so far been about effort, asking 'What if?'



TIMOTHY EVERSON
THE COLLEGIAN

"Probably the top 10."
Senior forward Nino Williams said it best after scoring 15 points in an upset win over in-state rival No. 8 Kansas.

Where would this K-State team be if it played to their full potential night in and night out? Where would this K-State team be if they bought in from the start of the season? Where would this team be if effort was never an issue?

We will never know, which, to be frank, is a real shame. We don't even know if the exemplary play against Kansas is even the best that K-State can play.

So far, though, the game against the Jayhawks was one of the Wildcats' best offensive performances, overshadowed only by outstanding defense against Kansas' perimeter players.

There wasn't a second half scoring drought that crippled the team like it did against Iowa State in Ames, Iowa or in both games against West Virginia.

It was just a solid 40 minutes of basketball all around.

So, you wonder, is Nino's assumption (which was said as more of a punchline and less of serious calculation) correct?

Let's look at the losses. Long Beach State, K-State's first loss of the season, would have been decimated by a team playing two-thirds as good as K-State was playing Monday night.

As for the Maui losses, Arizona was and is a really good team. That game goes down as K-State's best loss of the season, if there is such a thing. Effort was not the issue there. Losing by 20-plus points to Pittsburgh may have been the result of a letdown after such a close, emotion-filled loss to Arizona.

However, the Tennessee, Georgia and Texas Southern losses were all effort-based downfalls. The Big Monday K-State would be 3-0 against those teams.

Just putting away beatable opponents early in the season probably would have been enough



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Senior forward **Nino Williams** attempts a flying layup in the first half of the Wildcats' brutal 59-65 loss to No. 17 Mountaineers on Jan. 27 in Bramlage Coliseum.

to keep K-State dancing in NCAA Tournament for a sixth-straight year.

Sure, with their record, K-State's conference play would still be a disappointment. But the postseason would have been an attainable goal for this K-State team instead of something that might just be mathematically possible — maybe.

Plus, who know what the microcosms of not having a bad nonconference are for this team's fragile psyche?

Maybe confidence on the court earlier in the season alleviates the locker room trouble later in season? Maybe that stuff was doomed to happen from the beginning?

However, to answer the original question, if K-State put that kind of effort day in day out, it would be special.

The Wildcats have talent. Even with their inconsistencies, you don't beat the people you've beaten this season because of lack of talent.

People forget that however great the 2008-09 Elite Eight team was, they were a team. Sure they were led by a special player in Jacob Pullen, but it wasn't the talent that beat Xavier in two overtimes. It was the effort.

This K-State team has three options.

First option: they rally behind the Kansas game and go on a run that finds them dancing and happy once again in March. The fires would be temporarily put out, and weeks of wintertime misery would be forgotten by K-State fans.

Second option: the Wildcats stay on the good side of inconsistent and find their way into the NIT where this season is given a proper ending to its madness by K-State losing to a Florida or some other big name school who has also fumbled its season.

Third option: K-State gets blown out by Iowa State and Texas. The team, reeling once again at this point, meets angry and improved TCU and gets bounced in the Big 12 Tournament play-in game with a final record of 14-19. The Kansas goodwill vanishes and a dark offseason awaits.

K-State has the power and the ability to easily fall in any of the three options.

"At this point, it's about the effort. Like it has been, like it always will be.

Timothy Everson is a sophomore in mass communications. Please send comments to sports@kstatecollegian.com.

Freshman guard Tre Harris is slowly becoming a K-State star

BY EMILIO RIVERA
THE COLLEGIAN

Some players are well-known when they first step foot on the court in a team's uniform. Other players take time to mature before standing out. But then there's a third type of player: one that needs only the opportunity to show people what he is made of.

That third type of player is what freshman guard Tre Harris has become for K-State. Suspensions to sophomore guard Marcus Foster and freshman forward Malek Harris gave way to Harris to showcase his talents on the big stage in Big 12 play.

In high school, Harris garnered two Illinois All-State Hon-

orable Mention nods from the Associated Press. In his senior season, Harris averaged more than 17 points per game and connected on nearly 50 percent of his 3-point tries.

After high school, Harris decided to enroll in Waynesboro, Virginia's Fishburne Military School's post-graduate program to improve as a player.

In his lone season at the Virginia prep school, Harris led the team with 19 points per game. He signed with K-State midway through the season.

"On the court, he works hard, he's talented, he just has a knack for making big shots because he really has a smart IQ," Ed Huckaby Jr., Harris' coach at Fishburne, said. "He hustles and does everything you ask for on the court. Off the court, he

is a tremendous leader. He's articulate and well-spoken and you can tell that he's a well-rounded, well-educated man."

At Fishburne, Huckaby claims that Harris already had the skills and talent that he is utilizing today in Big 12 play.

"Tre walked into the door a player; he didn't walk into the door where he needed a lot of work, because he came in ready for the moment," Huckaby said. "The next step for Tre is to continue to improve every day like all players need to do."

In the four games this season where Harris has played over 20 minutes, he's scored finished in double-digits three times. In those three games, the Edwardsville, Illinois product is 17 for 27 from 3-point range.

His long-range talents were on display against No. 25 Texas, a game in which Harris finished with 12 points on 4-6 shooting from deep.

"I was just doing what I do in practice, just playing hard, playing confident, and keeping my teammates confident in me," Harris said. "I just took on my role and played a little bit harder and got some more minutes."

At times during this recent stretch, Harris has looked unstoppable from behind the arc. More importantly, he's looked comfortable.

"I am just thinking that I have to make shots, play smarter and play within myself and be more effective at the same time," Harris said.

Since taking on a greater role, teams have started taking notice of Harris' 3-point ability. The shots that were once seemingly wide open are now contested. Shots that were once going down are rimming out.

"Guys are keying in on me, just burning me off of the line, and everybody's just trying to pressure me," Harris said. "Being able to create off of the dribble and distributing to my teammates will definitely be the key to improving. I just need to remain confident and get stronger."



PARKER ROBB | THE COLLEGIAN

Freshman guard **Tre Harris** defends a shot from Texas guard **Kendall Yancy** in the second half of the Wildcats' loss to the Longhorns Feb. 7 in Bramlage Coliseum.

CONTINUED ON TIPOFF 3, "HARRIS"

PICK 'EM

WEEK 6

The crew lines up to pick the winners and losers of the week

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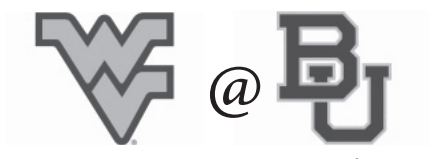
Voice of the Wildcats

15-10



Iowa State

K-State



West Virginia

Baylor



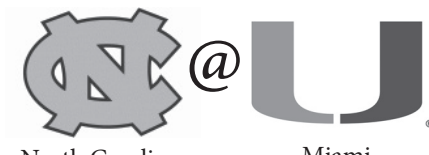
Northern Iowa

Wichita State



Arizona

Utah



North Carolina

Miami

HARRIS | Former coach says freshman is 'a leader' that 'knows how to inspire'

CONTINUED FROM TIPOFF 2

While the season's story has yet to be finished for K-State, Harris already knows what he has to do to improve his game and earn more playing time for his sophomore campaign.

"I need to keep working harder, try to expand my role in any way that I can, just keep building and becoming a better all around player," Harris said. "I just need to try to contribute and try to gain a good step in the direction for the season next year. I'm just going to keep working."

Harris' former coach is confident that the improvement he saw in the guard at Fishburne can be replicated this offseason in Manhattan.

"Tre is talented, he has a big heart," Huckaby said. "He lives for the big moment, he showed that here at Fishburne. You don't see guys like Tre every day. You see a lot of top players who have egos, and that's not Tre. He's always been a leader and he knows how to inspire guys."

While he is a star in the making for the Wildcats, one thing stands out about Harris, apart from playing time

or 3-pointers: he is a humble person who understands the role others have played in his life.

"He told me thank you for everything when he left, and he didn't have to do that," Huckaby said. "He was very sincere and that meant a lot to me. He's a heck of a young man and I would be proud to call him my own son."

Huckaby has a bold prediction about his former player, and it's not about his performance on the court: "He's going to be a CEO of a Fortune 500 company one day."

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